New York Tribune

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First to Last—the Truth: News—Editorials—Advertisements

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The Rhine Barrier

Marshal Foch declares that "the Rhine is the natural frontier which will protect civilization." All the world must note soberly what he says. He does not speak as a politician. He is not thinking in terms of national aggrandizement. His view is simply that of the clear-eyed soldier who has fought and won the battle of civilization and who wants to conserve the fruits of victory.

"The Rhine is the guarantee of peace for all nations who have shed their blood in the cause of liberty." So the Allied generalissimo holds. France made the greatest sacrifice to that cause. Possession of the Rhine barrier would help greatly to guarantee her against a repetition of that sacrifice. But the guarantee would be not for France alone. It would hold also for Western Europe and for the Allied nations which have just freed themselves from the menace of German frightfulness.

Foch's military judgment cannot easily be disputed. What if the safeguards of a league of nations turned out after all to be only paper safeguards? The countries which have felt the teeth and claws of the German beast cannot be blamed for demanding other safeguards. A Germany confined behind the barrier of the Rhine would hardly be able again to get that foothold in France and Belgium from which it took the Allied armies more than four years to dislodge her.

Germany prepared to conquer Western Europe when she annexed Alsace and Lorraine in 1871. In the great fortresses of the Rhine she already possessed an almost impregnable line of defence. In Metz she acquired a sally-port projecting into French territory. Belgium lay between the Rhine Province and Northern France. But the Germans intended to violate Belgian neutrality and thus find a second avenue of invasion leading toward Paris.

The supposed inviolability of Belgium was no protection to France. From a military point of view it would be no protection in the future. Adequately to guard both Belgium and France, the frontier of Western democracy would have to be advanced eastward to the Rhine from Switzerland to Holland. That would mean that Germany, intending to attack Western Europe again, would have first of all to clear the greatest single obstacle nature has placed in the way of armies marching west out of Prussia.

Even with Alsace and Lorraine lost the Rhine would remain Germany's line of mobilization on the west. This line is guarded by the fortresses of Cologne, Coblenz and Mainz. It could still serve, as it did in 1870, with the Rhine Province and Rhenish Bavaria as "jumping off" points beyond. If it were eliminated Germany would have to go back many miles and construct new systems of military concentration.

Marshal Foch makes no suggestions with regard to political reconstruction. That is outside his field. German territory west of the Rhine might be combined into an independent small state, neutralized as Belgium is or as Luxemburg is, the Allies retaining military control of the river. But these are questions for the statesmen at Paris who are recasting the map of Europe. Marshal Foch speaks only as a soldier who is trying to lessen the chances of another German irruption into Western Europe.

German military aspirations, as well as German patriotic sentiment, were crystallized in "Die Wacht am Rhein." Foch merely turns the facts of the military situation against the Germans when he says: "Then let us watch on the Rhine."

Our Disappearing Army

The United States has to-day a real army. It didn't have one until about a year ago. It will cease to have one as soon as a peace treaty is signed.

It is unfortunate that the War Department did not plan ahead for a peace army. The principle of conscriptive service vindicated itself so splendidly in our war experience that it would have been easy to recognize its permanency in a peace reorganization law. The value of universal training was also overwhelmingly demonstrated. It ought to have been made by this time the basis of our future military policy.

Secretary Baker has been reluctant to face the problem of reorganization. He doesn't want to commit himself to conscription or universal training. His only idea has been to demobilize the trained army we have—the regular units excepted—and to create a stop-gap volunteer force of 500,000 men. This would be very largely a new army, since after the peace treaty is signed the old regular army will be rapidly depleted by the expiration of enlistments. But even the stop-gap, 500,000-volunteer army plan has now been abandoned in favor of a proviso continuing the organization of the regular army for a year from July 1 next, leaving its strength to be fixed by executive order.

Many valuable officers who might have gone into the new army are now being mustered out. They may not want to return a couple of years from now. And popular interest in the military service will inevitably be chilled by a reversion, even temporarily, to the old type of volunteer army.

We ought never to have again the sort of army we had under the Hay act of 1916. It is a pity that the foundations of a new military system were not laid while the horrible example of the failure of the old system was still fresh in the public mind.

Writing Off a Billion on Ships

A vital question of public policy is involved in the proposition of Chairman Hurley of the Shipping Board to write off a billion dollars on the cost of ships now under construction by the United States government, rather than to attempt to lower wages. The situation appears to be this:

The new tonnage contracted for by the Shipping Board will cost on the present basis something like $200 a ton. This is roughly about three times the market price for similar tonnage in the two or three years just preceding the war. At the present time it is stated that such tonnage can be contracted for in England for about $110 a ton. It was stated by the British Ministry of Shipping at a recent interpellation of Parliament that this price was partly due to the fact that ship steel is supplied to English builders at such a price as to amount to a virtual bonus of about $10 a ton.

Although shipbuilding wages in England have also risen heavily, they have reached nothing like the unheard-of levels now prevailing in the United States. At Hog Island, for example, time labor runs as high as 96 cents an hour, which means nearly $8 for an ordinary eight-hour day, with no extra time charges. Practically speaking, the government faces one of two alternatives: It must either reduce these wages very sharply or else it must scale the cost by writing off a large part of it. It is understood that Chairman Hurley's proposition would amount to a reduction of about $100 a ton on ten million tons of ships. Only a small part of this tonnage is as yet completed.

It is highly probable that under present conditions the rates for ship steel in the United States could be considerably scaled down, though this would again depend in part upon the wages prevailing in the steel trade. These have risen nearly 100 per cent over 1914.

The importance of this scaling is not generally understood. A large part of a cargo vessel's cost of operation depends upon its first, or building, cost. On this depend charges for depreciation, interest and insurance, which make up much the larger part of the total. Wages on the freight boats are a relatively small item. The government could not sell its ships on the present cost basis. But it is understood that Norwegian and other shipping interests are in the American market ready to contract or purchase freely if a favorable price basis can be reached.

The question is whether the government shall pay the present level of shipbuilding wages and then let the taxpayers foot 40 per cent or more of the cost, or whether it shall take the bull by the horns and squarely meet an impossible economic situation. This is a problem which a Republican Congress will have to meet.

The Soldier Memorial

Fears that the temporary arch now being erected at Madison Square will be made permanent without proper consideration of its merits and fitness still persist. Mr. Thomas Hastings, who has charge of the general design, has expressed his own view clearly, and it is entirely sound. Only after the present structure of plaster has been built and observed and duly passed upon by the city and by the various artistic authorities does he suggest that the question of a permanent memorial be taken up. That does not appear to be the view of all those interested in the arch, however.

Therefore, the action of the city's chapter of the American Institute of Architects calling for a general competition of ideas and plans is timely and welcome. The proposal is comprehensive and broad-minded. A preliminary competition of ideas and suggestions is asked. For this any layman could enter, the idea being that the memorial to our soldiers and sailors ought to take any form that may be deemed most appropriate. We should not start out with the idea that it must necessarily be monumental or architectural, much less that it must be an arch or any particular type of structure. Let us say, to illustrate, that it might seem best to make our memorial a park or a driveway or scholarships. This preliminary competition would give ample opportunity to produce all the ideas available and submit them to public discussion for criticism.

It is the plan of the architects that decision among these ideas or suggestions shall be made by a jury of representative citizens chosen by such bodies as the Chamber of Commerce, the Merchants' Association, the Fine Arts Association and so on. Prizes are suggested in order to stimulate competition. Afterward there would be a technical competition to select a design, if the idea chosen was a matter of design.

We hope that this project will be carried through. Already it is plain that however beautiful the arch at Madison Square may be in itself and however fitting it is as a temporary greeting and symbol of victory grave questions as to its location will arise. Neither symmetry nor space are then to aid. Moreover, it is essential that a more searching review of the whole question should be made before final action is taken. Both to prevent artistic damage to the city and to insure a memorial accurately expressing the city's emotion toward our heroes, a competition of the sort described should be held.

The Luxurious West

The lower house of the Missouri Legislature evidently does not hold with the old school which taught that mortification of the flesh tended to exalt the spirit. A loud protest has gone up because the chairs of the various committee rooms in the new state Capitol are, as described by Walter E. Bailey, Speaker pro tem., "hard bottomed and straight backed." The members insist they cannot properly consider the needs of the commonwealth unless their bodies recline upon the upholstered variety of chair, the kind, in fact, familiar to the gaze of any visitor in legislative committee rooms and sequestered corners of clubs and hotel lobbies—great, leather cushioned affairs in which one reclines as on flowery beds of ease. The Missouri Solons, perched on their sightly height overlooking the turbulent "Big Muddy," seem to have forgotten those lines of Pope which say:

> "Stretch'd on the rack of a too easy chair,
> And heard thy everlasting yawn confess
> The Pains and Penalties of Idleness."

It may be somewhat of a shock, of course, to the voters of a state so long devoted to the principles of Jeffersonian simplicity to learn that the enervating luxuries of the softer East have penetrated to regions where a few generations ago the adze-hewn bench held the forms of those who congregated to listen to the eloquence of the great Benton. The legislators accused the Capitol building commission of carelessness in not being more thoughtful of the comfort of the members of the house. It would be interesting to hear the commission's defence. Possibly it thought chairs "hard bottomed and straight backed" might be an incentive to the rapid transaction of business.

The camouflage units soon to disembark here may expect an enthusiastic welcome from the Hylan-Hearst committee.

The Days of Real Sport : : : : : : : : : : By BRIGGS

"The Great Dry Mystery"

Communications show the public's reaction to the coming of prohibition.

To the Editor of The Tribune.

SIR: In your leading editorial of January 16, "The Great Dry Mystery," you say "The whole swift and hurried process defies analysis or explanation."

Next in importance to licking the Hun, and discrediting Hearst, comes the destruction of the liquor traffic, and why this great event should prove such a "mystery" to The Tribune is probably because The Tribune had no voice or part in bringing it about.

In order to get a true explanation of why members of the various state legislatures "fall over one another in their haste to ratify" The Tribune might get a glimpse of light by communicating with ex-Senators Brown, Emerson and Weeks, who opposed ratification last year, and who were replaced in the Senate this year by men who were elected pledged to ratify. The three ex-Senators mentioned are laboring under no delusions as to why they were retired to private life, and their explanations, providing they can be obtained, might help The Tribune out of the fog. Ex-Congressman Fairchild, whose record in Congress on prohibition measures was decidedly off color, can also tell The Tribune, if he will, why he was obliged to give way to Hill, one of the framers of the Hill-Wheeler bill, giving local option to cities. Congressman Hill was elected by the largest majority ever given a Congressional candidate in this district.

You say "state legislatures have not been famous for thus anticipating the popular will." A few object lessons like those just mentioned carry a persuasive force in their meaning that is correctly interpreted by legislators, even if to some of our great papers they may remain of our great papers it may remain a "great mystery." RAY BEARDSLEY.

Binghamton, N. Y., Jan. 16, 1919.

To the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: Your editorial of yesterday, "The Great Dry Mystery," is quite easy of solution: An economic boycott financed by German interests against Great Britain and France, especially the latter, as her revenue from this country is quite considerable from her brandy and wine industries.

New York, Jan. 18, 1919. N. H.

To the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: It occurs to one citizen of this Republic as a curiously anti-Ally coincidence that the German Theatre should announce a reopening to take place in a few weeks on the same day that the United States should "commit the atrocity" of taking the lives ("for you do take their lives when you take the means whereby they live") of the starving people of France and Italy by passing the "dry" law, thus cutting off the greatest export industry of the above named Allied countries. S. G. G. FAIRBANKS.

Larchmont, N. Y., Jan. 16, 1919.

To the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: A great many intelligent and patriotic Americans are in entire agreement with the statement made in to-day's Tribune in an editorial entitled "The Great Dry Mystery," which is as follows:

"The whole swift and hurried process defies analysis or explanation. It stands, for the present at any rate, one of the wonders of our political history."

Might it not be worth while for The Tribune to give publicity to the following inquiries, and to press for answers to them, in order that a mystified American public may get some light on this amazing and most undemocratic proceeding:

1. Is it a fact that a political and propaganda fund of not less than $16,000,000 has been used to bring about the passage, through both houses of Congress, of the joint resolution submitting the so-called prohibition amendment and to secure its speedy and unreflecting adoption by the necessary number of state legislatures?

2. Is it a fact that systematic use has been made of threats, terrorism and even blackmail to secure funds in Congress and in the several state legislatures for this amendment?

3. Is it a fact that this great fund has been raised in secrecy and expended without public accounting, in order to avoid the unpleasant effects of publicity and formal inquiry?

Why should not The Tribune turn on the light? O. W. BARNES.

New York, Jan. 16, 1919.

To the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: What is the cause for this wild cry for prohibition? Is it the fear on the part of the politicians of losing the women's vote? In that case there is no need for excitement, because among all the women I know personally—and I know quite a number in different parts of the country, dry and otherwise—there are only one or two who favor prohibition. Won't the restaurants boost their prices for food to such an extent that we will all be compelled to eat at home?

The majority of people drink and very few to excess. Look what happened to Russia! What a dreary country we will have! Is there no hope? ANNA S. HARDING.

Brooklyn, Jan. 18, 1919.

To the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: Your leading editorial to-day, 'The Great Dry Mystery," is itself a mystery. The mystery is why it is any mystery to The Tribune that legislatures all over the country are voting in favor of the constitutional amendment which will make America dry.

This should be no mystery to The Tribune, which has been carrying in news columns and on editorial page detailed accounts of the way the brewing element of this country has tried, in un-American ways and with anti-American propaganda, to corrupt the country, even going so far as to purchase daily papers to be their mouthpiece. Let me suggest a few things for you to think about—for you, at least, among New York dailies, occasionally reflect the sentiments and feelings of the nation at large, as contrasted with the sentiments of New York City alone. For you are as well aware as any one that New York is too largely populated by people of foreign birth for its popular opinions and sentiments to be considered typical of the rest of this great country. But here are two or three things for you and your readers, if you care to publish my letter, to think about:

1. Should the matter of prohibition be left entirely to the votes of the men and women who are native born, of native parents, there can be no question of the result. Let me add, I know it is not so left, but I am stating a theory to throw light on facts. For while there are doubtless some native Americans who would be "wet," I am sure they are proportionately few in numbers.

2. Outside those centres of population where great foreign born groups are found, most of our lawmakers are native born, of native parents—that is to say, real and true Americans who desire the American spirit and American ideals to rule. They feel—and I believe you will say rightly—that they not only should represent the people who elected them, but that they should not, in so doing, misrepresent the best elements of the communities from which they have come.

3. The war has been a wonderful cure for blindness in more ways than one, and one of those ways has been in the revelation to the thousands of thoughtful and sincere Americans that there is more than a casual connection between the great brewing interests and foreign propaganda. The Tribune has done its noble share in showing this to Americans.

4. America as a whole is American. It is extremely difficult for the New Yorker, in the deep canyons of his busy streets, to visualize this mighty country and to appreciate the fact that the country as a whole could, really and truly, worry along some way even if there were no New York. Yet there are millions of people who feel just that way about it. They do not want to get along without New York; they are proud of the greatest city, and all that. But they know that New York is not the nation. I am not berating New York; I am only stating a fact. I have been all over this country, time and again, and I know what people think and say.

Then, in view of these things, what becomes of the mystery? It is simply this: The American people as a whole, through their legislatures, are determined to enforce a new application of the Monroe Doctrine, "America for Americans" and for those who are being made and to be made Americans.

REV. ROBERT HUGH MORRIS.

Stamford, Conn., Jan. 16, 1919.

Our Men in Italy

To the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: To those of us who happen to have friends or relatives in military service in Italy it would almost seem that there is a "conspiracy of silence" concerning the activities of these. Naturally, and justly, there is and has been a vast deal to be read about what we did in France, and it would appear that there is not a square mile of that harassed country that has escaped being pictured or described. But while we have had American troops and aviators in Italy for nearly a year now, it is the rarest thing to find any mention of them in our newspapers, with, perhaps, the solitary exception of that brilliant aviation officer (now retired), Major Fiorello H. La Guardia.

Perhaps some one can explain this seemingly studied neglect of our boys in Italy. If they are not important enough to mention it may be that they are of no vital use there. If they are of no use there are many parents here who would be mighty glad to have them sent home.

WILSON A. BURROWS.

Yonkers, N. Y., Jan. 16, 1919.

A Plea for the Pianist

(From The Columbus Evening Dispatch)

With Paderewski at the head of its government, Poland should put up that Western mining camp theatre sign: "Don't shoot the pianist; he is doing the best he can."

"Alms, for the Love of Allah!"

(From The St. Paul Pioneer Press)

Next after war charities we may be asked to contribute to a fund for the relief of the $12,000-a-year Cabinet officers.

A Week of Verse

The Return

(From The Century)

GOLDEN through the golden morning,
Who is this that comes,
With the pride of banners lifted,
With the roll of drums?

With the self-same triumph shining
In the ardent glance,
That divine, bright fate-defiance
That you bore to France.

You! But o'er your grave in Flanders
Blow the winter gales;
Still for sorrow of your going
All life's laughter fails.

Borne on flutes of dawn the answer:
"O'er the foam's white track,
God's work done, so to our homeland
Comes her hosting back.

"Come the dead men with the live men
From the marshes far,
From the mounds in no-man's-valley,
Lit by cross nor star.

"Come to blend with hers the essence
Of their strength and pride,
All the radiance of the dreaming
For whose truth they died."

So the dead men with the live men
Pass an hosting fair,
And the stone is rolled forever
From the soul's despair.

ELEANOR ROGERS COX.

Plus Tard

(From The Yale Review)

AND later on, those who are left will say
Little about it; they will not care to tell
Much of those years—content to buy and sell,
To practise law, relive in the old way
The old quiet, humdrum round. One will be gray,
A trifle bent, a trifle frail, and—well,
If some one asks him where his comrades fell
In France, he may grow garrulous. . . .
He may,
Or may he not. It all depends. If he
Is sitting at dusk by a slow-embered fire
And his pet grandchild questions him, why then
He may begin to hear the guns again,
His hands may fumble toward the treacherous wire
That . . .
"Sonny," he'll sigh, "at Château Thierry."

LEE WILSON DODD.

Graves in France

(From The Yale Review)

THEIR fates shall be a song, a schoolboy's wonder,
For many a day—
O, the red treasure we have buried yonder,
So far away!

O, the poor, panting love that must go weeping
Through bloody foam,
To find the soldier in his glory sleeping,
So far from home!

France, we have loved thee! But beyond all measure
Our love shall be
Since in thy bosom we have hid our treasure
Of agony.

KARLE WILSON BAKER.

Triumph

(From The Sonnet)

HEART'S measure gave I. Is it all forgot?
Winds cannot blow or beat it into dust,
Or waters cover it, or moth and rust
Corrupt it into aught that it was not.
For what is more remembered than the spring,
The scarlet tulips running through the grass
By a wet wall, and gone with but Alas?
I know not how I know this old, old thing:
How now, poor one, that loved me for a space?
Mine is the triumph of the tulip flower;
My ruined April will not let you by;
To east my laughter, and to west my face
Housed with you ever, down some poignant hour
There drifts the scrap of music that was I.

LIZETTE WOODWORTH REESE.

Humanity

(From The Pages)

AN infinitely good-natured Newfoundland puppy,
Perpetually stepping with clumsy feet
On the edges of academic saucers
And unsetting the milk over neat carpets. . . .

A puppy continually circling after its own tail
And snapping at sunlight,
Basking in hot street
And getting its paws run over
By elemental motor-trucks. . . .

A poor devil of a puppy,
Starving, half-intelligent,
But with great hungry eyes.

ROYAL SNOW.

Portrait

(From The Quill)

YOU laugh
And ride life as if it were a bronco.
As it rears and tries to kill you
You only cling tighter
And laugh.
Other men life may have thrown and trampled,
But you will break it to your will
And make it carry you wherever you wish to go.

MARY CAROLYN DAVIES.

Vulgar Display of Wealth

(From The Salt Lake Herald)

The price of eggs has dropped. Notwithstanding this fact, a man will still carry a bit of the yolk on his vest with some degree of pride.